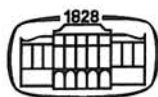


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as "Supreme Wisdom literature". It means that Witz presupposes that the Upanishadic sages speak the Truth, so in order to understand them the best way is to listen to other texts and persons (including modern saints such as Satya Sai Baba) talking about the same absolute Truth. This is hermeneutically unsound: even if there were such a transcendental Truth, and even if it were unmistakably knowable to some gurus, and even if it were expressible in any human language: how could a scholar tell the divine inspiration from a clever fraud or a pathetic failure to find the higher reality? Of course, Witz knows and extensively uses the results of modern scholarship; still I feel that his work would be of greatest use to those people who wish to teach others the Supreme Wisdom, as seen in the classical Upanishads.

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Ferenc Ruzsa

LÁSZLÓ VIKÁR–GÁBOR BERECKZI, *Tatar Folksongs*. Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest 1999, 516 pp.

The story began in 1906, when the wife of Yürö Wichman, the Finnish linguist, gave Béla Bartók some Cheremiss folksongs collected by her. There was a startling resemblance between these melodies and the Hungarian "fifth-shifting" melodies. Bartók made up his mind to travel to the land of the Cheremiss, but because of World War I, this plan was postponed forever.

Some half a century later Zoltán Kodály sent one of his students, László Vikár, to the Volga–Kama region to study Cheremiss melodies. It soon became clear that these melodies live only along the Cheremiss–Chuvash border and both Cheremiss and Chuvash people sing

them. It became evident that it would not be enough to study the folk music of a single nation, but to collect folk music of all the people living there. Step by step the research, which first aimed to find Cheremiss melody parallels to Hungarian fifth-shifting melodies, turned to a complex survey of the folk music of a larger multinational area.

László Vikár, the musician, and Gábor Bereczki, the linguist, carried out extended research work between 1957 and 1979 in the territory bounded by the rivers Volga, Kama and Belaya. The fruits of the research were innumerable publications, among which the more complex are the musical monographs about Cheremiss, Chuvash and Votyak folksongs. The fourth and – according to the authors – last volume of these valuable series came to light recently: the *Tatar Folksongs*.

They collected and recorded 580 tunes in the Tatar administrative area and 634 among the Bashkirs, totalling 1214. The book presents less than half of these tunes.

In the first chapter we read the short history of the Tatar people and the Tatar language written by Gábor Bereczki. This is followed by an overview of Tatar folksong collections between 1816–1979. This study was not intended to be complete. As László Vikár wrote: "the great bulk of old Tatar collections are probably only available in Russia, or can be hopefully unearthed there". However, here one can find the most important publication of this field. A particular stress was laid on Mahmud Nigmedzyanov, who organised Vikár's journeys and published more than 800 Tatar folksongs.

One of the most important parts of the book is the classification of the Tatar melody-forms and melody-types. In general the goal of the classification is to place side by side the tunes of the same style, and within a style, those of identical tune type. This task was done by László Vikár at the usual high level. But, as he himself had put it: "it is almost impossible to impose a strict system upon the living and constantly changing musical material". And really one might wonder if it is necessary to separate during classification the two-sectioned melo-

dies with AB form from two-sectioned ones with ABB form, if the musical content of A and B is the same.

An important finding is that there is a big difference between the folk music of Moslem Tatars and that of the "kreshchonni" Tatars, who were converted to Russian Christianity. What is more they do not sing the songs of each other. According to Vikár the "kreshchonni" Tatars preserve the oldest and very simple melodies. This observation may strengthen the presentiment that the large compass pentatonic melodies of the Cheremiss, Chuvash, Tatar, Bashkir might be of relatively later origin. At the same time we should remember that the large compass and the pentatonism is very typical of Mongolian folksongs. Vikár himself says: "The inventive profusion of motives and easy pliable ornamentation of Tatar pentatonic is somewhere in the middle between the two ends of Euro-Asia, even if all organic connections are disregarded".

While in Hungarian folk music the role of the four-sectioned melodies is outstanding, this is not the case in the folk music of many other peoples, e.g. the Tatars. Here half of the tunes is two- or three-sectioned and the other half is four-sectioned. The most common scales are the *so-*, *la-* and *do-pentatonic* without semitones. And an important observation: a quarter of the collected Tatar folksongs contains lower fourth or fifth (not quite complete) answer.

In Tatar lyrical songs four-line strophes predominate, with symbolical image of nature or some other content in the first two lines which the second two lines concretise. This is very characteristic of the lyrical songs of the Turkic, Hungarian and some other people. Among the genres we find lots of lyrical songs, and a few love songs, epic songs, soldier's song, tunes connected to folk costumes and calendar feasts and religious songs. Surprisingly there is not a single lullaby, children's song or a mourning song found.

What is very important is that we are given all kinds of data: the date and place of the recording, the name and age of the singer, their

identification code in the HAS, and in the notes we find other useful additional data. The texts were translated by Gábor Bereczki, the eminent Finno-Ugrian linguist. Árpád Berta helped him to understand the unusual meaning of some Tatar texts. The text under the notes were written down in a simplified version of the Setälä transcription used in Finno-Ugrian linguistics and not in a transcription used in Turkic scholarship. The reason for this was to preserve the unity of the four volumes. Anyhow the Tatar folklore collection of H. Paasonen was also published in this transcription.

We can read the original texts of the Tatar songs under the notes in handwriting as well. The Hungarian translation was made by Gábor Bereczki with affection and care. He prepared the beautiful translation of folk texts in all the four volumes. The English prose translations of the Tatar song-texts are correct.

In the Indexes we find a detailed list of Tatar folksongs in the Institute for Musicology HAS (1968–1977), the Hungarian and English transcription of the Tatar place-names and the list of songs grouped by localities. For musicians the classification of tunes by syllable count of the first stanza, by tone-set and the compass of tunes contains valuable information. Those who are interested in more details concerning Tatar and Bashkir folk music find a basic bibliography. At the end of the volume we also find some photographs.

To sum it up, this Tatar volume is a great asset for both ethnomusicologists and linguists. As a result of primary experiences and field works it gives an authentic picture of the living linguistic and musical processes, and combines the precise publication of data with the scientific classification. The value of this work is multiplied by the fact that this is the fourth volume of a series of the folksongs and folk text of the music of the Turkic and Finno-Ugrian peoples living in the Volga–Kama region. We can only hope that this excellent work will be continued.

János Sipos